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Agreement aims to ease state water woes

By RICHARD T. ESTRADA
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California took another step toward solving its water problems Friday with the release of a water agreement that should serve as the framework for the CalFed Bay-Delta Program.

The agreement contains a plan to create an additional 1.5 million to 2 million acre-feet of storage capacity. The \$8.5 billion proposal also includes funding for ecosystem restoration, levee strengthening, water quality enhancement and conservation.

"This is not the solution to California's water problems, but it is a major breakthrough in moving the process forward," said Rep. Gary Condit, D-Ceres. "It's action-oriented. There are dates for constructing facilities and time lines for meeting objectives. It's very balanced."

The negotiating teams consisted of state and federal officials, rather than the dozens of agriculture, water and environmental groups that participated in past CalFed discussions. Condit and Gov. Davis were the only elected officials taking part.

The agreement includes specific proposals on the two issues crucial to California's \$26 billion agriculture industry and environmental groups: water storage and ecosystem restoration.

Vital to ag is the water storage element. Farmers have long sought an increase in California's reservoir and water storage system, feeling it is crucial to their long-term financial health.

"The governor has recognized that reliable

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